INTRODUCTION.

Though prefaces seem of late to have fallen under some reproach, they have at least this advantage, that they set us again on the feet of our personal consciousness and rescue us from the gregarious mock-modesty or cowardice of that we which shrills feebly throughout modern literature like the shrieking of mice in the walls of a house that has past its prime. Having a few words to say to the many friends whom the "Biglow Papers" have won me, I shall accordingly take the freedom of the first person singular of the personal pronoun. Let each of the good-natured unknown who have cheered me by the written communication of their sympathy look upon this Introduction as a private letter to himself.

When, more than twenty years ago, I wrote the first of the series, I had no definite plan and no intention of ever writing another. Thinking the Mexican war, as I think it still, a national crime committed in behalf of Slavery, our common sin, and wishing to put the feeling of those who
thought as I did in a way that would tell, I imagined to myself such an upcountry man as I had often seen at antislavery gatherings, capable of district-school English, but always instinctively falling back into the natural stronghold of his homely dialect when heated to the point of self-forgetfulness. When I began to carry out my conception and to write in my assumed character, I found myself in a strait between two perils. On the one hand, I was in danger of being carried beyond the limit of my own opinions, or at least of that temper with which every man should speak his mind in print, and on the other I feared the risk of seeming to vulgarize a deep and sacred conviction. I needed on occasion to rise above the level of mere patois, and for this purpose conceived the Reverend Mr. Wilbur who should express the more cautious element of the New England character and its pedantry, as Mr. Biglow should serve for its homely common-sense vivified and heated by conscience. The parson was to be the complement rather than the antithesis of his parishioner, and I felt or fancied a certain humorous element in the real identity of the two under a seeming incongruity. Mr. Wilbur's fondness for scraps of Latin, though drawn from the life, I adopted deliberately to heighten the contrast. Finding soon after that I needed some one as a mouthpiece of the mere drolleries, for I conceive that true humor is never divorced from moral conviction, I invented Mr. Sawin for the clown of my little puppet-show. I meant to embody in him that half-conscious wanners which I had noticed as the recoil in gross natures from a puritanism that still strove to keep in its creed the intense savors which had long gone out of its faith and life. In the three I thought I should find room enough to express, as it was my plan to do, the popular feeling and opinion of the time. For the names of two of my characters, since I have received some remonstrances from very worthy persons who happened to bear them, I would say that they were purely fortuitous, probably mere unconscious memories of signboards or directories. Mr. Sawin's sprang from the accident of a rhyme at the end of his first epistle, and I purposely christened him by the impossible surname of Birdofredum not more to stigmatize him as the incarnation of "Manifest Destiny," in other words, of national recklessness as to right and wrong, than to avoid the chance of wounding any private sensitiveness.

The success of my experiment soon began not only to astonish me, but to make me feel the responsibility of knowing that I held in my hand a weapon instead of the mere fencing-stick I had supposed. Very far from being a popular au-
tor under my own name, so far, indeed, as to be almost unread, I found the verses of my pseudonym copied everywhere; I saw them pinned up in workshops; I heard them quoted and their authorship debated; I once even, when rumor had at length caught up my name in one of its eddies, had the satisfaction of overhearing it demonstrated, in the pauses of a concert, that I was utterly incompetent to have written anything of the kind. I had read too much not to know the utter worthlessness of contemporary reputation, especially as regards satire; but I knew also that by giving a certain amount of influence it also had its worth, if that influence were used on the right side. I had learned, too, that the first requisite of good writing is to have an earnest and definite purpose, whether aesthetic or moral, and that even good writing, to please long, must have more than an average amount either of imagination or common-sense. The first of these falls to the lot of scarcely one in several generations; the last is within the reach of many in every one that passes; and of this an author may fairly hope to become in part the mouthpiece. If I put on the cap and bells and made myself one of the court-fools of King Demos, it was less to make his majesty laugh than to win a passage to his royal ears for certain ser-
rious things which I had deeply at heart. I say this because there is no imputation that could be more galling to any man's self-respect than that of being a mere jester. I endeavored, by generalizing my satire, to give it what value I could beyond the passing moment and the immediate application. How far I have succeeded I cannot tell, but I have had better luck than I ever looked for in seeing my verses survive to pass beyond their nonage.

In choosing the Yankee dialect, I did not act without forethought. It had long seemed to me that the great vice of American writing and speaking was a studied want of simplicity, that we were in danger of coming to look on our mother-tongue as a dead language, to be sought in the grammar and dictionary rather than in the heart, and that our only chance of escape was by seeking it at its living sources among those who were, as Scottowe says of Major-General Gibbons, "divinely illiterate." President Lincoln, the only really great public man whom these latter days have seen, was great also in this, that he was master — witness his speech at Gettysburg — of a truly masculine English, classic because it was of no special period, and level at once to the highest and lowest of his countrymen. But whoever should read the debates in
Congress might fancy himself present at a meeting of the city council of some city of southern Gaul in the decline of the Empire, where barbarians with a Latin varnish emulated each other in being more than Ciceronian. Whether it be want of culture, for the highest outcome of that is simplicity, or for whatever reason, it is certain that very few American writers or speakers wield their native language with the directness, precision, and force that are common as the day in the mother country. We use it like Scotsmen, not as if it belonged to us, but as if we wished to prove that we belong to it, by showing our intimacy with its written rather than with its spoken dialect. And yet all the while our popular idiom is racy with life and vigor and originality, bucksome (as Milton used the word) to our new occasions, and proves itself no more graft by sending up new suckers from the old root in spite of us. It is only from its roots in the living generations of men that a language can be reinforced with fresh vigor for its needs; what may be called a literate dialect grows ever more and more pedantic and foreign, till it becomes at last as unfitting a vehicle for living thought as monkish Latin. That we should all be made to talk like books is the danger with which we are threatened by the Universal Schoolmaster, who does his best to enslave the minds and memories of his victims to what he esteems the best models of English composition, that is to say, to the writers whose style is faultily correct and has no blood-warmth in it. No language after it has faded into diction, none that cannot suck up the feeding juices secreted for it in the rich mother-earth of common folk, can bring forth a sound and lusty book. True vigor and heartiness of phrase do not pass from page to page, but from man to man, where the brain is kindled and the lips supplied by downright living interests and by passion in its very throe. Language is the soil of thought, and our own especially is a rich leaf-mould, the slow deposit of ages, the shed foliage of feeling, fancy, and imagination, which has suffered an earth-change, that the vocal forest, as Howell called it, may clothe itself anew with living green. There is death in the dictionary; and, where language is too strictly limited by convention, the ground for expression to grow in is limited also; and we get a potted literature, Chinese dwarfs instead of healthy trees.

But while the schoolmaster has been busy starching our language and smoothing it flat with the mangle of a supposed classical authority, the newspaper reporter has been doing even more
harm by stretching and swelling it to suit his occasions. A dozen years ago I began a list, which I have added to from time to time, of some of the changes which may be fairly laid at his door. I give a few of them as showing their tendency, all the more dangerous that their effect, like that of some poisons, is insensibly cumulative, and that they are sure at last of effect among a people whose chief reading is the daily paper. I give in two columns the old style and its modern equivalent.

**Old Style.**

Was hanged.
When the halter was put round his neck.

A great crowd came to see.
Great fire.
The fire spread.
House burned.
The fire was got under.

Man fell.
A horse and wagon ran against.

The frightened horse.
Sent for the doctor.

**New Style.**

Was launched into eternity.
When the fatal noose was adjusted about the neck of the unfortunate victim of his own unbridled passions.

A vast concourse was assembled to witness.
Disastrous conflagration.
The conflagration extended its devastating career.
Edifice consumed.
The progress of the devouring element was arrested.
Individual was precipitated.
A valuable horse attached to a vehicle driven by J. S., in the employment of J. B., collided with.
The infuriated animal.
Called into requisition the services of the family physician.

In one sense this is nothing new. The school of Pope in verse ended by wire-drawing its phrase to such thinness that it could bear no weight of meaning whatever. Nor is fine writing by any means confined to America. All writers without imagination fall into it of necessity whenever they attempt the figurative. I take two examples from Mr. Merivale’s “History of the Romans under the Empire,” which, indeed, is full of such. “The last years of the age familiarly styled the Augustan were singularly barren of
the literary glories from which its celebrity was chiefly derived. One by one the stars in its firmament had been lost to the world; Virgil and Horace, &c., had long since died; the charm which the imagination of Livy had thrown over the earlier annals of Rome had ceased to shine on the details of almost contemporary history; and if the flood of his eloquence still continued flowing, we can hardly suppose that the stream was as rapid, as fresh, and as clear as ever.” I will not waste time in criticising the bad English or the mixture of metaphor in these sentences, but will simply cite another from the same author which is even worse. “The shadowy phantom of the Republic continued to flit before the eyes of the Caesar. There was still, he apprehended, a germ of sentiment existing, on which a scion of his own house, or even a stranger, might boldly throw himself and raise the standard of patrician independence.” Now a ghost may haunt a murderer, but hardly, I should think, to scare him with the threat of taking a new lease of its old tenement. And fancy the scion of a house in the act of throwing itself upon a germ of sentiment to raise a standard! I am glad, since we have so much in the same kind to answer for, that this bit of horticultural rhetoric is from beyond sea. I would not be supposed to condemn truly imaginative prose. There is a simplicity of splendor, no less than of plainness, and prose would be poor indeed if it could not find a tongue for that meaning of the mind which is behind the meaning of the words. It has sometimes seemed to me that in England there was a growing tendency to curtail language into a mere convenience, and to defecate it of all emotion as thoroughly as algebraic signs. This has arisen, no doubt, in part from that healthy national contempt of humbug which is characteristic of Englishmen, in part from that sensitiveness to the ludicrous which makes them so shy of expressing feeling, but in part also, it is to be feared, from a growing distrust, one might almost say hatred, of whatever is super-material. There is something sad in the scorn with which their journalists treat the notion of there being such a thing as a national ideal, seeming utterly to have forgotten that even in the affairs of this world the imagination is as much matter-of-fact as the understanding. If we were to trust the impression made on us by some of the cleverest and most characteristic of their periodical literature, we should think England hopelessly stranded on the good-humored cynicism of well-to-do middle-age, and should fancy it an enchanted nation, doomed to sit forever with its feet under the mahogany in that after-dinner mood.
which follows conscientious repletion, and which it is ill-manners to disturb with any topics more exciting than the quality of the wines. But there are already symptoms that a large class of Englishmen are beginning to get weary of the dominion of consols and divine common-sense, and to believe that eternal three per cent is not the chief end of man, nor the highest and only kind of interest to which the powers and opportunities of England are entitled.

The quality of exaggeration has often been remarked on as typical of American character, and especially of American humor. In Dr. Petri’s Gedrängtes Handbuch der Fremdwörter, we are told that the word humbug is commonly used for the exaggerations of the North Americans. To be sure, one would be tempted to think the dream of Columbus half fulfilled, and that Europe had found in the West a nearer way to Orientalism, at least in diction. But it seems to me that a great deal of what is set down as mere extravagance is more fitly to be called intensity and picturesqueness, symptoms of the imaginative faculty in full health and strength, though producing, as yet, only the raw and formless material in which poetry is to work. By and by, perhaps, the world will see it fashioned into poem and picture, and Europe, which will be hard pushed for originality ere long, may have
to thank us for a new sensation. The French continue to find Shakespeare exaggerated because he treated English just as our country-folk do when they speak of a “steep price,” or say that they “freeze to” a thing. The first postulate of an original literature is that a people should use their language instinctively and unconsciously, as if it were a lively part of their growth and personality, not as the mere torpid boon of education or inheritance. Even Burns contrived to write very poor verse and prose in English. Vulgarisms are often only poetry in the egg. The late Mr. Horace Mann, in one of his public addresses, commented at some length on the beauty and moral significance of the French phrase s’orienter, and called on his young friends to practise upon it in life. There was not a Yankee in his audience whose problem had not always been to find out what was about east, and to shape his course accordingly. This charm which a familiar expression gains by being commented, as it were, and set in a new light by a foreign language, is curious and instructive. I cannot help thinking that Mr. Matthew Arnold forgets this a little too much sometimes when he writes of the beauties of French style. It would not be hard to find in the works of French Academicians phrases as coarse as those
he cites from Burke, only they are veiled by the unfamiliarity of the language. But, however this may be, it is certain that poets and peasants please us in the same way by translating words back again to their primal freshness, and infusing them with a delightful strangeness which is anything but alienation. What, for example, is Milton’s “edge of battle” but a doing into English of the Latin acies? Was die Gans gedacht das der Schwan vollbracht, what the goose but thought, that the swan full brought (or, to de-Saxonize it a little, what the goose conceived, that the swan achieved), and it may well be that the life, invention, and vigor shown by our popular speech, and the freedom with which it is shaped to the instant want of those who use it, are of the best omen for our having a swan at last. The part I have taken on myself is that of the humbler bird.

But it is affirmed that there is something innately vulgar in the Yankee dialect. M. Sainte-Beuve says, with his usual neatness: “Je définis un patois une ancienne langue qui a eu des malheurs, ou encore une langue toute jeune et qui n’a pas fait fortune.” The first part of his definition applies to a dialect like the Provençal, the last to the Tuscan before Dante had lifted it into a classic, and neither, it seems to me, will quite fit a patois, which is not properly a dialect, but rather certain archaisms, proverbial phrases, and modes of pronunciation, which maintain themselves among the uneducated side by side with the finished and universally accepted language. Norman French, for example, or Scotch down to the time of James VI., could hardly be called patois, while I should be half inclined to name the Yankee a lingo rather than a dialect. It has retained a few words now fallen into disuse in the mother country, like to tarry, to progress, fleshy, fall, and some others; it has changed the meaning of some, as in freshet; and it has clung to what I suspect to have been the broad Norman pronunciation of e (which Molière puts into the mouth of his rustics) in such words as servant, perfect, vartoo, and the like. It maintains something of the French sound of a also in words like châmer, dânger (though the latter had certainly begun to take its present sound so early as 1636, when I find it sometimes spelt dainger). But in general it may be said that nothing can be found in it which does not still survive in some one or other of the English provincial dialects. I am not speaking now of Americanisms properly so called, that is, of words or phrases which have grown into use here either through necessity, invention, or accident, such as a carry, a one-horse affair, a
prairie, to vamose. Even these are fewer than is sometimes taken for granted. But I think some fair defence may be made against the charge of vulgarity. Properly speaking, vulgarity is in the thought, and not in the word or the way of pronouncing it. Modern French, the most polite of languages, is barbarously vulgar if compared with the Latin out of which it has been corrupted, or even with Italian. There is a wider gap, and one implying greater boorishness, between ministerium and métier, or sapiens and sanchant, than between drew and drove, or agin and against, which last is plainly an arrant superlative. Our rustic coverlid is nearer its French original than the diminutive coverlet, into which it has been ignorantly corrupted in politer speech. I obtained from three cultivated Englishmen at different times three diverse pronunciations of a single word, — cowcumber, coocumber, and cucumber. Of these the first, which is Yankee also, comes nearest to the nasality of concombre. Lord Ossory assures us that Voltaire saw the best society in England, and Voltaire tells his countrymen that handkerchief was pronounced hankcher. I find it so spelt in Hakluyt and elsewhere. This enormity the Yankee still persists in, and as there is always a reason for such deviations from the sound as represented by the spelling, may we not suspect two sources of derivation, and find an ancestor for kercher in couverture rather than in couvrechef? And what greater phonetic vagary (which Dryden, by the way, called fe-gary) in our lingua rustica than this ker for couvre? I copy from the fly-leaves of my books where I have noted them from time to time a few examples of pronunciation and phrase which will show that the Yankee often has antiquity and very respectable literary authority on his side. My list might be largely increased by referring to glossaries, but to them every one can go for himself, and I have gathered enough for my purpose. I will take first those cases in which something like the French sound has been preserved in certain single letters and diphthongs. And this opens a curious question as to how long this Gallicism maintained itself in England. Sometimes a divergence in pronunciation has given us two words with different meanings, as in genteel and jantey, which I find coming in toward the close of the seventeenth century, and wavering between genteel and jantey. It is usual in America to drop the u in words ending in our, — a very proper change recommended by Howell two centuries ago, and carried out by him so far as his printers would allow. This and the corresponding changes in musique, musick, and the like, which he also advocated, show that in his time the French accent indicated by the superfluous letters
(for French had once nearly as strong an accent as Italian) had gone out of use. There is plenty of French accent down to the end of Elizabeth's reign. In Daniel we have riches and counsel, in Bishop Hall comet, chaplain, in Donne pictures, virtue, presence, mortal, merit, hainous, giant, with many more, and Marston's satires are full of them. The two latter, however, are not to be relied on, as they may be suspected of Chaucerizing. Herrick writes baptisme. The tendency to throw the accent backward began early. But the incongruities are perplexing, and perhaps mark the period of transition. In Warner's "Albion's England" we have creator and creature side by side with the modern creator and creature. Envy and envying occur in Campion (1602), and yet envy survived Milton. In some cases we have gone back again nearer to the French, as in revenue for revenue. I had been so used to hearing imbecile pronounced with the accent on the first syllable, which is in accordance with the general tendency in such matters, that I was surprised to find imbecile in a verse of Wordsworth. The dictionaries all give it so. I asked a highly cultivated Englishman, and he declared for imbecel. In general it may be assumed that accent will finally settle on the syllable dictated by greater ease and therefore quickness of utterance. Blasphemous, for example, is more rapidly pronounced than blasphemous, to which our Yankee clings, following in this the usage of many of the older poets. American is easier than American, and therefore the false quantity has carried the day, though the true one may be found in George Herbert, and even so late as Cowley.

To come back to the matter in hand. Our "uplandish men" retain the soft or thin sound of the u in some words, such as rule, truth (sometimes also pronounced truth, not troth), while he says noo for new, and gives to view and few so indescribable a mixture of the two sounds with a slight nasal tincture that it may be called the Yankee shibboleth. In rule the least sound of a precedes the u. I find reule in Pecock's "Repressor." He probably pronounced it rayoolé, as the old French word from which it is derived was very likely to be sounded at first, with a reminiscence of its original regula. Tindal has rueler, and the Coventry Plays have prudent. As for noo, may it not claim some sanction in its derivation, whether from nouveau or neuf, the ancient sound of which may very well have been noof, as nearer novus? Beef would seem more like to have come from buffe than from bœuf, unless the two were mere varieties of spelling. The Saxon few may have caught enough from its French cousin peu to claim the benefit of the same doubt as to sound; and our slang phrase a few (as "I licked
him a few") may well appeal to _un peu_ for sense and authority. Nay, might not _lick_ itself turn out to be the good old word _lam_ in an English disguise, if the latter should claim descent as, perhaps, he fairly might, from the Latin _lambere?_ The New England _force_ for _fierce_, and _perce_ for _pierce_ (sometimes heard as _fairce_ and _pairce_), are also Norman. For its antiquity I cite the rhyme of _verse_ and _pierce_ in Chapman and Donne, and in some commendatory verses by a Mr. Berkenhead before the poems of Francis Beaumont. Our _pairlous_ for _perilous_ is of the same kind, and is nearer Shakespeare's _parlous_ than the modern pronunciation. One other Gallicism survives in our pronunciation. Perhaps I should rather call it a semi-Gallicism, for it is the result of a futile effort to reproduce a French sound with English lips. Thus for _joint_, _employ_, _royal_ we have _jynt_, _empyl_, _ryle_, the last differing only from _rile_ (roll) in a prolongation of the _y_ sound. In Walter de Biblesworth I find _solives_ Englished by _gistes_. This, it is true, may have been pronounced _jeests_, but the pronunciation _jystes_ must have preceded the present spelling, which was no doubt adopted after the radical meaning was forgotten, as analogical with other words in _oi_. In the same way after Norman-French influence had softened the _l_ out of _would_ (we already find _woud_ for _veut_ in N. F. poems), _should_ followed the example, and then _an l_ was put into _could_, where it does not belong, to satisfy the logic of the eye, which has affected the pronunciation and even the spelling of English more than is commonly supposed. I meet with _oyster_ for _oyster_ as early as the fourteenth century. I find _dystrye_ for _destroy_ in the Coventry Plays, _viage_ in Bishop Hall and Middleton the dramatist, _bile_ in Donne and Chrononhotonthologos, _line_ in Hall, _ryall_ and _chysse_ (for _choice_) in the Coventry Plays. In Chapman's "All Fools" is the misprint of _employ_ for _imply_, fairly inferring an identity of sound in the last syllable. Indeed, this pronunciation was habitual till after Pope, and Rogers tells us that the elegant Gray said _naise_ for _noise_ just as our rustics still do. Our _cornish_ (which I find also in Herrick) remembers the French better than _cornice_ does. While, clinging more closely to the Anglo-Saxon in dropping the _g_ from the end of the present participle, the Yankee now and then pleases himself with an experiment in French nasality in words ending in _n_. It is not, so far as my experience goes, very common, though it may formerly have been more so. _Capting_, for instance, I never heard save in jest, the habitual form being _kapp'n_. But at any rate it is no invention of ours. In that delightful old volume, "Ane Compendious Buke of Godly and Spirituall Songs," in which I know not
whether the piety itself or the simplicity of its expression be more charming, I find burding, garding, and cousins, and in the State Trials uncerrtng used by a gentleman. The n for ng I confess preferring.

Of Yankee preterites I find riss and ris for rose in Middleton and Dryden, cilm in Spenser, chees (chose) in Sir John Mandevil, give (gave) in the Coventry Plays, shet (shut) in Golding’s Ovid,* het in Chapman and in Weever’s Epitaphs, thriv and smit in Drayton, quit in Ben Jonson and Henry More, and pled in the fastidious Landor. Rid for rode was antiently common. So likewise was see for saw, but I find it in no writer of authority, unless Chaucer’s see was so sounded. Shew is used by Hector Boece, Giles Fletcher, and Drummond of Hawthornden. Similar strong preterites, like sneu, thew, and even meuw, are not without example. I find sew for sawed in Piers Ploughman. Indeed, the anomalies in English preterites are perplexing. We have probably transferred flew from flow (as the preterite of which I have heard it) to fly because we had another preterite in fled. Of weak preterites the Yankee retains growed, blowed, for which he has good authority, and less often knowed. His got is merely a broad sounding of sat, no more inelegant than the com-

* Cited in Warton’s Obs. Faery Q.

mon got for gat, which he further degrades into gut. When he says darst, he uses a form as old as Chaucer.

The Yankee has retained something of the long sound of the a in such words as axe, wax, pronouncing them exe, wax (shortened from aix, wax). He also says hev and hed (hæve, hæd) for have and had. In most cases he follows an Anglo-Saxon usage. In aix for axle, he certainly does. I find wex and aisches (ashes) in Pecock, and exe in the Paston Letters. Chaucer wrote hendy. Dryden rhymes can with men, as Mr. Biglow would. Alexander Gill, Milton’s teacher, in his “Lagonomia” cites hes for hath as peculiar to Lincolnshire. I find hayth in Collier’s “Bibliographical Account of Early English Literature” under the date 1584, and Lord Cromwell so wrote it. Sir Christopher Wren wrote belony. Thaim for them was common in the sixteenth century. We have an example of the same thing in the double form of the verb thrash, thresh. While the New-Englander cannot be brought to say instead for instid (commonly ‘stid where not the last word in a sentence), he changes the i into e in red for rid, tell for till, hinder for hinder, rense for rinse. I find red in the old interlude of “Theresies,” tell in a letter of Daborne to Henslowe, and also, I shudder to mention it, in a letter of the great Duchess of Marlborough, Atossa herself! It oc-
curs twice in a single verse of the Chester Plays, which I copy as containing another Yankeeism: —

"Tell the day of dome, tell the beames blow."

From this word blow is formed blowth, which I heard again this summer after a long interval. Mr. Wright* explains it as meaning "a blossom." With us a single blossom is a blow, while blowth means the blossoming in general. A farmer would say that there was a good blowth on his fruit-trees. The word retreats farther inland and away from the railways, year by year. Wither rhymes hinder with slender, and Lovelace has renched for rinsed. In "Gammer Gurton" is sence for since; Marlborough's Duchess so writes it, and Donne rhymes since with Amiens and patience, Bishop Hall and Otway with pretence, Chapman with citizens, Dryden with providence. Indeed, why should not sithence take that form?

E sometimes takes the place of u, as jedge, tredge, bresh. I find tredge in the interlude of "Jack Juggling," bresh in a citation by Collier from "London Cries" of the middle of the seventeenth century, and resche for rush (fifteenth century) in the very valuable "Volume of Vocabularies" edited by Mr. Wright. Resche is one of the Anglo-Saxon forms of the word in Bosworth's A. S. Dictionary. The

* Dictionary of Obsolete and Provincial English.

Yankee always shortens the u in the ending ture, making ventur, natur, pictur, and so on. This was common, also, among the educated of the last generation. I am inclined to think it may have been once universal, and I certainly think it more elegant than the vile vencher, naycher, pickcher, that have taken its place, sounding like the invention of a lexicographer with his mouth full of hot pudding. Nash in his "Pierce Penniless" has ventur, and so spells it, and I meet it also in Spenser, Drayton, Ben Jonson, Herrick, and Prior. Spenser has tort'rest, which can only be contracted from tortur and not from torcher. Quarles rhymes nature with creator, and Dryden with satire, which he doubtless pronounced according to its older form of satyr.

I shall now give some examples which cannot so easily be ranked under any special head. Gill charges the Eastern counties with kiver for cover, and ta for to. The Yankee pronounces both too and to like ta (like the tou in touch) where they are not emphatic. In that case, both become tu. In old spelling, to is the common (and indeed correct) form of too, which is only to with the sense of in addition. I suspect that the sound of our too has caught something from the French tout, and it is possible that the old too-too is not a reduplication, but a reminiscence of the feminine form of the same word (toute) as anciently pronounced,
with the e not yet silenced. Gill gives a Northern origin to geawn for gown and waund for wound (vulnus). Lovelace has waund, but there is something too dreadful in suspecting Spenser (who borealiized in his pastorals) of having ever been guilty of geawn! And yet some delicate mouths even now are careful to observe the Hibernism of ge-ard for guard, and ge-url for girl. Sir Philip Sidney (credite posteri!) wrote fur for far. I would hardly have believed it had I not seen it in fac-simile. As some consolation, I find furder in Lord Bacon and Donne, and Wither rhymes far with cur. The Yankee, who omits the final d in many words, as do the Scotch, makes up for it by adding one in geound. The purist does not feel the loss of the d sensibly in laurn and yon, from the former of which it has dropped again after a wrongful adoption (retained in laundry), while it properly belongs to the latter. But what shall we make of git, yit, and yis? I find yis and git in Warner’s “Albion’s England,” yet rhyming with wit, admit, and fit in Donne, with wit in the “Revenger’s Tragedy,” Beaumont, and Suckling, with writ in Dryden, and latest of all with wit in Sir Hanbury Williams. Prior rhymes fitting and begetting. Worse is to come. Among others, Donne rhymes again with sin, and Quarles repeatedly with in. Ben for been, of which our dear Whittier is so fond, has the authority of Sackville, “Gammer Gurton” (the work of a bishop), Chapman, Dryden, and many more, though bin seems to have been the common form. Whittier’s accenting the first syllable of romance finds an accomplice in Drayton among others, and though manifestly wrong, is analogous with Romans. Of other Yankeeisms, whether of form or pronunciation, which I have met with I add a few at random. Pecock writes sowdiers (sogers, soudyers), and Chapman and Gill sodder. This absorption of the l is common in various dialects, especially in the Scottish. Pecock writes also biyende, and the authors of “Jack Jugler” and “Gammer Gurton” yender. The Yankee includes “yon” in the same category, and says “hither an’ yen,” for “to and fro.” (Cf. German jenseits.) Pecock and plenty more have wrastle. Tindal has agynste, gretter, shett, ondone, debytes, and scace. “Jack Jugler” has scacely (which I have often heard, though skourse is the common form), and Donne and Dryden make great rhyme with set. In the inscription on Caxton’s tomb I find ynd for end, which the Yankee more often makes eend, still using familiarly the old phrase “right anend” for “continuously.” His “stret (straight) along” in the same sense, which I thought peculiar to him, I find in Pecock. Tindal’s debyte for deputy is so
perfectly Yankee that I could almost fancy the brave martyr to have been deacon of the First Parish at Jaaaln Centre. "Jack Jugler," further gives us playsent and sartayne. Dryden rhymes certain with parting, and Chapman and Ben Jonson use certain, as the Yankee always does, for certainly. The "Coventry Mysteries" have occupied, massage, nateralle, material (material), and meracles, all excellent Yankeeisms. In the "Quatre fils Aymon" (1504) * is vertus for virtuous. Thomas Fuller called volume vollum, I suspect, for he spells it volumne. However, per contra, Yankees habitually say colume for column. Indeed, to prove that our ancestors brought their pronunciation with them from the Old Country, and have not wantonly debased their mother tongue, I need only to cite the words scriptur, Israll, atistes, and cheverfulness from Governor Bradford's "History." So the good man wrote them, and so the good descendants of his fellow-exiles still pronounce them. Brampton Gurdon writes shet in a letter to Winthrop. Pur tendr (pretend) has crept like a serpent into the "Paradise of Dainty Devices"; purvide, which is not so bad, is in Chaucer. These, of course, are universal vulgarisms, and not peculiar to the Yankee. Butler has a Yankee phrase and pronunciation too in, "To which these carr'ings-on did tend." Langham or Laneham, who wrote an account of the festivities at Kenilworth in honor of Queen Bess, and who evidently tried to spell phonetically, makes sorrows into sororz. Herrick writes hollow for hollo, and perhaps pronounced it (horresco suggerens?) holla, as Yankees do. Why not, when it comes from holâ? I find ffelaschyppe (fellowship) in the Coventry Plays. Spenser and his queen neither of them scrupled to write afore, and the former feels no inelegance even in chaw. 'Fore was common till after Herrick. Afeared was once universal. Warner has ery for ever a, nay, he also has illy, with which we were once ignorantly reproached by persons more familiar with Murray's grammar than with English literature. And why not illy? Mr. Bartlett says it is "a word used by writers of an inferior class, who do not seem to perceive that ill is itself an adverb, without the termination ly," and quotes Dr. Messer, President of Brown University, as asking triumphantly, "Why don't you say welly?" I should like to have had Dr. Messer answer his own question. It would be truer to say that it was used by people who still remembered that ill was an adjective, the shortened form of evil, out of which Shakespeare ventured to make evilly. The objection to illy is not an etymological one, but simply that it is contrary to good usage, a very suf-

* Cited in Collier. (I give my authority where I do not quote from the original book.)
ficient reason. *Ill* as an adverb was at first a vulgarism, precisely like the rustic's when he says, "I was treated *bad*." May not the reason of this exceptional form be looked for in that tendency to dodge what is hard to pronounce, to which I have already alluded? If the letters were distinctly uttered, as they should be, it would take too much time to say *ill-ly, well-ly*, and it is to be observed that we have avoided *smallly* and *tally* in the same way, though we add *ish* to them without hesitation in *smallish* and *tallish*. We have, to be sure, *dully* and *fully*, but for the one we prefer *stupidly*, and the other (though this may have come from eliding the *y* before *as*) is giving way to *full*. The uneducated, whose utterance is slower, still make adverbs when they will by adding *like* to all manner of adjectives. We have had *big* charged upon us, because we use it where an Englishman would now use *great*. I fully admit that it were better to distinguish between them, allowing to *big* a certain contemptuous quality, but as for authority, I want none better than that of Jeremy Taylor, who, in his noble sermon "On the Return of Prayer," speaks of "Jesus, whose spirit was meek and gentle up to the greatness of the biggest example." As for our double negative, I shall waste no time in quoting instances of it, because it was once as universal in English as it still is in the neo-Latin languages, where it does not strike us as vulgar. I am not sure that the loss of it is not to be regretted. But surely I shall admit the vulgarity of slurring or altogether eliding certain terminal consonants? I admit that a clear and sharp-cut enunciation is one of the crowning charms and elegancies of speech. Words so uttered are like coins fresh from the mint, compared with the worn and dingy drudges of long service,—I do not mean American coins, for those look less badly, the more they lose of their original ugliness. No one is more painfully conscious than I of the contrast between the rifle-crack of an Englishman's *yes* and *no*, and the wet-fuse drawl of the same monosyllables in the mouths of my countrymen. But I do not find the dropping of final consonants disagreeable in Allan Ramsay or Burns, nor do I believe that our literary ancestors were sensible of that inelegance in the fusing them together of which we are conscious. How many educated men pronounce the *t* in *chestnut*? how many say *pentise* for *penthouse*, as they should? When a Yankee skipper says that he is "boun' for Glos-ter" (not Gloucëster, with the leave of the Universal Schoolmaster), he but speaks like Chaucer or an old ballad-singer, though they would have pronounced it *boon*. This is one of the cases where the *a* is surreptitious, and has been added in compliment to the verb *bind*, with which it has nothing
to do. If we consider the root of the word, (though of course I grant that every race has a right to do what it will with what is so peculiarly its own as its speech,) the d has no more right there than at the end of gone, where it is often put by children, who are our best guides to the sources of linguistic corruption, and the best teachers of its processes. Cromwell, minister of Henry VIII., writes worle for world. Chapman has wan for wand, and laun has rightfully displaced laund, though with no thought, I suspect, of etymology. Rogers tells us that Lady Bathurst sent him some letters written to William III. by Queen Mary, in which she addresses him as “Dear Husban.” The old form expoun, which our farmers use, is more correct than the form with a barbarous d tacked on which has taken its place. Of the kind opposite to this, like our gound for gown, and the London cockney’s wind for wine, I find dround for droun in the “Misfortunes of Arthur” (1584), and in Swift. And, by the way, whence came the long sound of wind which our poets still retain, and which survives in “winding” a horn, a totally different word from “winding” a kite-string? We say behind and hinder (comparative), and yet to hinder. Shakespeare pronounced kind kind, or what he comes of his play on that word and kin in Hamlet? Nay, did he not even (shall I dare to hint it?)

drop the final d as the Yankee still does? John Lilly plays in the same way on kindred and kindness. But to come to some other ancient instances. Warner rhymes bounds with crowns, grounds with towns, text with sex, worst with crust, interrupts with cups; Drayton, defects with sex; Chapman, amends with cleanse; Webster, defects with checks; Ben Jonson, minds with combines; Marston, trust and obsequious, clothes and shows; Dryden gives the same sound to clothes, and has also minds with designs. Of course, I do not affirm that their ears may not have told them that these were imperfect rhymes (though I am by no means sure of that), but they surely would never have tolerated any such, had they suspected the least vulgarity in them. Prior has the rhyme first and trust, but puts it into the mouth of a landlady. Swift has stunted and burnt it, an intentionally imperfect rhyme, no doubt, but which I cite as giving precisely the Yankee pronunciation of burned. Donne couples in unhallowed wedlock after and matter, thus seeming to give to both the true Yankee sound, and it is not uncommon to find after and daughter. Worse than all, in one of Dodsley’s Old Plays we have onions rhyming with minions,—I have tears in my eyes while I record it. And yet what is viler than the universal Misses (Mrs.) for Mistress? This was once a vulgarism, and in “The Miseries of In-
forced Marriage" the rhyme (printed as prose in Dodsley’s Old Plays by Collier),

"To make my young mistress,
Delighting in kisses,"

is put in the mouth of the clown. Our people say Injun for Indian. The tendency to make this change where i follows d is common. The Italian giorno and French jour from diurnus are familiar examples. And yet Injun is one of those depravations which the taste challenges peremptorily, though it have the authority of Charles Cotton, who rhymes “Indies” with “cringes,” and four English lexicographers, beginning with Dr. Sheridan, bid us say invidious. Yet after all it is no worse than the debasement which all our terminations in tion and tence have undergone, which yet we hear with resignashun and payshunce, though it might have aroused both impat-ience and indigna-tion in Shakespeare’s time. When George Herbert tells us that if the sermon be dull,

"God takes a text and preacheth pati-ence,"

the prolongation of the word seems to convey some hint at the longanimity of the virtue. Consider what a poor curtail we have made of Ocean. There was something of his heave and expanse in o-ce-an, and Fletcher knew how to use it when he wrote

so fine a verse as the second of these, the best deep-sea verse I know,—

"In desperate storms stem with a little rudder
The tumbling ruins of the ocean."

Oceanus was not then wholly shorn of his divine proportions, and our modern oshun sounds like the gush of small-beer in comparison. Some other contractions of ours have a vulgar air about them. More’n for more than, as one of the worst, may stand for a type of such. Yet our old dramatists are full of such obscurations (elisions they can hardly be called) of the th, making whe’r of whether, bro’r of brother, smo’r of smother, mo’r of mother, and so on. Indeed, it is this that explains the word rare (which has Dryden’s support), and which we say of meat where an Englishman would use underdone. I do not believe, with the dictionaries, that it had ever anything to do with the Icelandic hrár (raw), as it plainly has not in rareripe, which means earlier ripe. And I do not believe it for this reason, that the earlier form of the word with us was, and the commoner now in the inland parts still is, so far as I can discover, raredone. I find rather as a monosyllable in Donne, and still better as giving the sound, rhyming with fair in Warner. The contraction more’n I find in the old play “Huimus Troes,” in a verse where the
measure is so strongly accented as to leave it beyond doubt,—

"A golden crown whose heirs
More than half the world subdue."

It may be, however, that the contraction is in "th' orld." Is our gin for given more violent than mar'l for marvel, which was once common, and which I find as late as Herrick? Nay, Herrick has gin (spelling it g'en), too, as do the Scotch, who agree with us likewise in preferring chimly to chimney.

I will now leave pronunciation and turn to words or phrases which have been supposed peculiar to us, only pausing to pick up a single dropped stitch in the pronunciation of the word supreme, which I had thought native till I found it in the well-languaged Daniel. I will begin with a word of which I have never met with any example in print. We express the first stage of withering in a green plant suddenly cut down by the verb to wilt. It is, of course, own cousin of the German welken, but I have never come upon it in print, and my own books of reference give me faint help. Graff gives welßen, marcescere, and refers to weih (weak), and conjecturally to A. S. hvelan. The A. S. wealwian (to wither) is nearer, but not so near as two words in the Icelandic, which perhaps put us on the track of its ancestry, velgi (tepifacere) and velki, with the derivative meaning contaminare. Wilt, at any rate, is a good word, filling, as it does, a sensible gap between drooping and withering, and the imaginative phrase "he wilted right down," like "he caved right in," is a true Americanism. Wilt occurs in English provincial glossaries, but is explained by wither, which with us it does not mean. We have a few words, such as cache, cohog, carry (portage), shoot (chute), timber (forest), bushwhack (to pull a boat along by the bushes on the edge of a stream), buckeye (a picturesque word for the horse-chestnut), but how many can we be said to have fairly brought into the language, as Alexander Gill, who first mentions Americanisms, meant it when he said, "Sed et ab Americanis nonnulla mutuamur ut maiz et canoa"? Very few, I suspect, and those mostly by borrowing from the French, German, Spanish, or Indian. "The Dipper" for the "Great Bear" strikes me as having a native air. Bogus, in the sense of worthless, is undoubtedly ours, but is, I more than suspect, a corruption of the French bagasse (from low Latin bagassea), which travelled up the Mississippi from New Orleans, where it was used for the refuse of the sugar-cane. It is true we have modified the meaning of some words. We use freshet in the sense of flood, for which I have not chanced upon
any authority. Our New England cross between Ancient Pistol and Dugald Dalgetty, Captain Underhill, uses the word (1638) to mean a current, and I do not recollect it elsewhere in that sense. I therefore leave it with a ? for future explorers. Crick for creek I find in Captain John Smith and in the dedication of Fuller’s “Holy Warre,” and run, meaning a small stream, in Waymouth’s “Voyage” (1605). Humans for men, which Mr. Bartlett includes in his “Dictionary of Americanisms,” is Chapman’s habitual phrase in his translation of Homer. I find it also in the old play of “The Hog hath lost his Pearl.” Dogs for andirons is still current in New England, and in Walter de Biblesworth I find ohiens glossed in the margin by andirons. Gunning for shooting is in Dryden. We once got credit for the poetical word fall for autumn, but Mr. Bartlett and the last edition of Webster’s Dictionary refer us to Dryden. It is even older, for I find it in Drayton, and Bishop Hall has autumn fall. Middleton plays upon the word: “May’st thou have a reasonable good spring, for thou art like to have many dangerous foul falls.” Lord Herbert of Cherbury (more properly perhaps than even Sidney the last preux chevalier) has “the Emperor’s folks” just as a Yankee would say it. Loan for lend, with which we have hitherto been blackened, I must retort upon the mother island, for it appears so long ago as in “Albion’s England.” Flesh, in the sense of stout, may claim Ben Jonson’s warrant. Chor is also Jonson’s word, and I am inclined to prefer it to chare and char, because I think that I see a more natural origin for it in the French jour, whence it might come to mean a day’s work, and thence a job, than anywhere else. At onst for at once I thought a corruption of our own, till I found it in the Chester Plays. I am now inclined to suspect it no corruption at all, but only an erratic and obsolete superlative at onest. To progress was flung in our teeth till Mr. Pickering retorted with Shakespeare’s “doth progress down thy cheeks.” I confess that I was never satisfied with this answer, because the accent was different, and because the word might here be reckoned a substantive quite as well as a verb. Mr. Bartlett (in his Dictionary above cited) adds a surrebutter in a verse from Ford’s “Broken Heart.” Here the word is clearly a verb, but with the accent unhappily still on the first syllable. Mr. Bartlett says that he “cannot say whether the word was used in Bacon’s time or not.” It certainly was, and with the accent we give to it. Ben Jonson, in the “Alchemist,” has this verse, —

“Progress’ so from extreme unto extreme.”

Surely we may now sleep in peace, and our
English cousins will forgive us, since we have cleared ourselves from any suspicion of originality in the matter! Poor for lean, thirds for dower, and dry for thirsty I find in Middleton's plays. Dry is also in Skelton and in the "World" (1754). In a note on Middleton, Mr. Dyce thinks it needful to explain the phrase I can't tell (universal in America) by the gloss I could not say. Middleton also uses sneaked, which I had believed an Americanism till I saw it there. It is, of course, only another form of snatch, analogous to theek and thatch (cf. the proper names Dekker and Thacher), break (brack) and breach, make (still common with us) and match. "Long on for occasioned by ("who is this 'long on?'"") occurs likewise in Middleton. 'Cause why is in Chaucer. Raising (an English version of the French leaven) for yeast is employed by Gayton in his "Festivous Notes on Don Quixote." I have never seen an instance of our New England word emplins in the same sense, nor can I divine its original. Gayton has timekill; also shutts for shutters, and the latter is used by Mrs. Hutchinson in her "Life of Colonel Hutchinson." Bishop Hall, and Purchas in his "Pilgrims," have chist for chest, and it is certainly nearer cista as well as to the form in the Teutonic languages, whence we probably got it. We retain the old sound in cist, but chest is as old as Chaucer.

Lovelace says wropt for wrapt. "Musicianer" I had always associated with the militia-musters of my boyhood, and too hastily concluded it an abomination of our own, but Mr. Wright calls it a Norfolk word, and I find it to be as old as 1642 by an extract in Collier. "Not worth the time of day" had passed with me for native till I saw it in Shakespeare's "Pericles." For slick (which is only a shorter sound of sleek, like crick and the now universal britches for breeches) I will only call Chapman and Jonson. "That's a sure card!" and "That's a stinger!" both sound like modern slang, but you will find the one in the old interlude of "Thersytes" (1587), and the other in Middleton. "Right here," a favorite phrase with our orators and with a certain class of our editors, turns up passim in the Chester and Coventry plays. Mr. Dickens found something very ludicrous in what he considered our neologism right away. But I find a phrase very like it, and which I half suspect to be a misprint for it, in "Gammer Gurton": —

"Lyght it and bring it tite away."

After all, what is it but another form of straightway? Cussedness, meaning wickedness, malignity, and cuss, a sneaking, ill-natured fellow, in such phrases as "He done it out o' pure cussedness,"
and “He is a nateral cuss,” have been commonly thought Yankeeisms. To vent certain contemptuously-indignant moods they are admirable in their rough-and-ready way. But neither is our own. Curseydnesse, in the same sense of malignant wickedness, occurs in the Coventry Plays, and cuss may perhaps claim to have come in with the Conqueror. At least the term is also French. Saint Simon uses it and confesses its usefulness. Speaking of the Abbé Dubois he says, “Qui étoit en plein ce qu’un mauvais français appelle un sacre, mais qui ne se peut guère exprimer autrement.” “Not worth a cuss,” though supported by “not worth a damn,” may be a mere corruption, since “not worth a cress” is in “Piers Ploughman.” “I don’t see it” was the popular slang a year or two ago, and seemed to spring from the soil; but no, it is in Cibber’s “Careless Husband.” “Green sauce” for vegetables I meet in Beaumont and Fletcher, Gayton, and elsewhere. Our rustic pronunciation sahce (for either the diphthong aw was ancienly pronounced ah, or else we have followed abundant analogy in changing it to the latter sound, as we have in chance, dance, and so many more) may be the older one, and at least gives some hint at its ancestor salsa. Warn, in the sense of notify, is, I believe, now peculiar to us, but Pecock so employs it. To cotton to is, I rather think, an Americanism. The nearest approach to it I have found is cotton together, in Congreve’s “Love for Love.” To cotton or cotten, in another sense, is old and common. Our word means to cling, and its origin, possibly, is to be sought in another direction, perhaps in A. S. cwead, which means mud, clay (both proverbially clinging), or better yet, in the Icelandic kvoda (otherwise kóð), meaning resin and glue, which are κατ ’ ἐξοχήν sticky substances. To spit cotton is, I think, American, and also, perhaps, to flax for to beat. To the halves still survives among us, though apparently obsolete in England. It means either to let or to hire a piece of land, receiving half the profit in money or in kind (partibus locare). I mention it because in a note by some English editor, to which I have lost my reference, I have seen it wrongly explained. The editors of Nares cite Burton. To put, in the sense of to go, as Put! for Begone! would seem our own, and yet it is strictly analogous to the French se mettre à la voie, and the Italian mettersi in via. Indeed, Dante has a verse,

“Io saraì [for mi saraì] più messo per lo sentiero,”

which, but for the indignity, might be translated,

“I should, ere this, have put along the way.”

I deprecate in advance any share in General Banks’s notions of international law, but we may all
take a just pride in his exuberant eloquence as something distinctively American. When he spoke a few years ago of "letting the Union slide," even those who, for political purposes, reproached him with the sentiment, admired the indigenous virtue of his phrase. Yet I find "let the world slide" in Heywood's "Edward IV."; and in Beaumont and Fletcher's "Wit without Money" Valentine says,

"Will you go drink,
And let the world slide?"

In the one case it is put into the mouth of a clown, in the other, of a gentleman, and was evidently proverbial. It has even higher sanction, for Chaucer writes,

"Well nigh all other carest let he slide."

Mr. Bartlett gives "above one's bend" as an Americanism; but compare Hamlet's "to the top of my bent." In his tracks for immediately has acquired an American accent, and passes where he can for a native, but is an importation nevertheless; for what is he but the Latin e vestigio, or at best the Norman French eneslepes, both which have the same meaning? Hotfoot (provincial also in England) I find in the old romance of "Tristan,"

"Si s'en part chaut pas."

Like for as is never used in New England, but is universal in the South and West. It has on its side the authority of two kings (ego sum rex Romanorum et supra grammaticam), Henry VIII. and Charles I. This were ample, without throwing into the scale the scholar and poet Daniel. Them was used as a nominative by the majesty of Edward VI., by Sir P. Hoby, and by Lord Paget (in Froude's "History"). I have never seen any passage adduced where guess was used as the Yankee uses it. The word was familiar in the mouths of our ancestors, but with a different shade of meaning from that we have given it, which is something like rather think, though the Yankee implies a confident certainty by it when he says, "I guess I du!" There are two examples in Otway, one of which ("So in the struggle, I guess the note was lost") perhaps might serve our purpose, and Coleridge's

"I guess 't was fearful there to see"

certainly comes very near. But I have a higher authority than either in Selden, who, in one of his notes to the "Polyolbion," writes, "The first inventor of them (I guess you dislike not the addition) was one Berthold Swartz." Here he must mean by it, "I take it for granted." Another peculiarity almost as prominent is the beginning sentences, especially in answer to questions, with "well." Put before such a phrase as "How d'
do?" it is commonly short, and has the sound of
wul, but in reply it is deliberative, and the various
shades of meaning which can be conveyed by dif-
fERENCE of intonation, and by prolonging or abbre-
viating, I should vainly attempt to describe. I have
heard ooa-ahl, wahl, ahl, wul, and something near-
ly approaching the sound of the le in able. Some-
times before "I" it dwindles to a mere l, as "l I
dunno." A friend of mine (why should I not
please myself, though I displease him, by brighten-
ing my page with the initials of the most exquisite
of humorists, J. H.?) told me that he once heard
five "wells," like pioneers, precede the answer to
an inquiry about the price of land. The first was
the ordinary wul, in deference to custom; the sec-
ond, the long, perpendic ooaahl, with a falling in-
flection of the voice; the third, the same, but with
the voice rising, as if in despair of a conclusion,
into a plaintively nasal whine; the fourth, wulh,
ending in the aspirate of a sigh; and then, fifth,
came a short, sharp wul, showing that a conclusion
had been reached. I have used this latter form in
the "Biglow Papers," because, if enough nasality
be added, it represents most nearly the average
sound of what I may call the interjection.

A locution prevails in the Southern and Middle
States which is so curious that, though never heard
in New England, I will give a few lines to its dis-
cussion, the more readily because it is extinct else-
where. I mean the use of allow in the sense of
affirm, as "I allow that's a good horse." I find
the word so used in 1558 by Anthony Jenkinson
in Hakluyt: "Corn they sowe not, neither doe
cate any bread, mocking the Christians for the
same, and disabling our strength, saying we live
by eating the toppe of a weede, and drinke a drinke
made of the same, allowing theyr great devouring
of flesh and drinking of milke to be the increase of
theyr strength." That is, they undervalued our
strength, and affirmed their own to be the result of
a certain diet. In another passage of the same
narrative the word has its more common meaning
of approving or praising: "The said king, much
allowing this declaration, said." Ducange quotes
Bracton sub voce ADLOCARE for the meaning
"to admit as proved," and the transition from this
to "affirm" is by no means violent. At the same
time, when we consider some of the meanings of al-
low in old English, and of allowe in old French, and
also remember that the verbs prise and praise are
from one root, I think we must admit a laudare to a
share in the paternity of allow. The sentence from
Hakluyt would read equally well, "contemning our
strength, . . . . and praising (or valuing) their
great eating of flesh as the cause of their increase
in strength." After all, if we confine ourselves to
allocate, it may turn out that the word was somewhere and somewhere used for to bet, analogously to put up, put down, put (cf. Spanish apostar), and the like. I hear boys in the street continually saying, “I bet that’s a good horse,” or what not, meaning by no means to risk anything beyond their opinion in the matter.

The word improve, in the sense of “to occupy, make use of, employ,” as Dr. Pickering defines it, he long ago proved to be no neologism. He would have done better, I think, had he substituted profit by for employ. He cites Dr. Franklin as saying that the word had never, so far as he knew, been used in New England before he left it in 1723, except in Dr. Mather’s “Remarkable Providences,” which he oddly calls a “very old book.” Franklin, as Dr. Pickering goes on to show, was mistaken. Mr. Bartlett in his “Dictionary” merely abridges Pickering. Both of them should have confined the application of the word to material things, its extension to which is all that is peculiar in the supposed American use of it. For surely “Complete Letter-writers” have been “improving this opportunity” time out of mind. I will illustrate the word a little further, because Pickering cites no English authorities. Skelton has a passage in his “Phyllyp Sparowe,” which I quote the rather as it contains also the word allowed, and as it distinguishes improve from employ:

“His [Chaucer's] Englysh well allowed,
So as it is emprowed,
For as it is employd,
There is no English voyd.”

Here the meaning is to profit by. In Fuller’s “Holy Warre” (1647), we have “The Egyptians standing on the firm ground, were thereby enabled to improve and enforce their darts to the utmost.” Here the word might certainly mean to make use of. Mrs. Hutchinson (Life of Colonel H.) uses the word in the same way, “And therefore did not emprrove his interest to engage the country in the quarrell.” I find it also in “Strength out of Weakness” (1652), and Plutarch’s “Morals” (1714), but I know of only one example of its use in the purely American sense, and that is, “a very good improvement for a mill” in the “State Trials” (Speech of the Attorney-General in the Lady Ivy’s case, 1684). In the sense of employ, I could cite a dozen old English authorities.

In running over the fly-leaves of those delightful folios for this reference, I find a note which reminds me of another word, for our abuse of which we have been deservedly ridiculed. I mean lady. It is true I might cite the example of the Italian donna (domina), which has been treated in the same way by a whole nation, and not, as lady

* Dame, in English, is a decayed gentlewoman of the same family.